packaging and maintain such strength during the storage of the bone, the method comprising:

a) contacting the bone with a mechanical strength-conserving amount of at least one biocompatible mechanical strength-conserving agent, said agent being a liquid organic material which is capable of penetrating and remaining in the bone during its lyophilization, packaging and storage;

b) lyophilizing the bone containing the mechanical strength-conserving agent; and,

c) packaging the lyophilized bone.

34. (New) A lyophilized monolithic bone implant containing at least one biocompatible mechanical strength-conserving agent, said agent being a liquid organic material which is capable of penetrating and remaining in the bone during its lyophilization, packaging and storage.--

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing is respectfully requested.

By Virtue of the present Preliminary Amendment, Applicants have endeavored to copy the claims of U.S. Patent No. 6,162,258 for the purposes of provoking an interference. The present Preliminary Amendment is submitted in conjunction with a Request By Applicants For Interference Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.607 wherein the Applicants respectfully request that an interference be declared between the above-identified application and U.S. Patent No. 6,162,258. It will be appreciated that such patent issued on December 19, 2000. Accordingly, the present amendment is in full compliance with 35 U.S.C. §135(b). The information required by 37 C.F.R. §1.607(a) is set forth below under headings which correspond to the subsections of §1.607 to facilitate consideration by the Examiner.